

CSCE NEWS RELEASE

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

234 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6460
Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, Chairman
Rep. Christopher Smith, Co-Chairman

Contact: Chadwick R. Gore
1-202-225-1901
e-mail: CGORE@HR.HOUSE.GOV

Commission Calls On Slovak Government To End Political Violence On First Anniversary of Remias Murder

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**Contact: Chadwick R. Gore
(202) 225-1901**

Washington, D.C.—Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairman Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-C-NY) and Co-Chairman Representative Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) today released the following text of a letter sent to Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar of the Republic of Slovakia yesterday:

“We call upon you, your party and the other parties which constitute the governing coalition, and your government to end political violence against opponents of the government, to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes, and to restore Slovakia to the path of democratic reform.

“As the July date of the NATO Summit approaches, many questions remain regarding the process and pace of NATO enlargement. One fact, however, seems clear: in light of the deteriorating human rights situation in Slovakia over the past year, your country will most probably not be in the initial group of countries invited to begin negotiations for accession to NATO.

“Unfortunately, under your government Slovakia has failed to meet many challenges in the field of human rights, and restoration of the international community's faith in Slovakia's commitment to democracy and reform will require progress on a number of fronts. Certainly the United States has a substantial interest in a strong, democratic, and prosperous Slovakia. For the sake of the people of Slovakia, we are hopeful that a new course towards full protection of human rights can begin immediately.

continued on page 2 of 2

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe by law monitors and encourages progress in implementing the provisions of the Helsinki Accords. The Commission, created in 1976, is made up of nine Senators, nine Representatives and one official each from the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense. For more information about the Commission, please call (202) 225-1901.

CSCE NEWS RELEASE

page 2 of 2

“The most pressing issue in the human rights field is the problem of unsolved political violence against opponents of your government and governing coalition.

“Tomorrow, April 29, 1997, is the first anniversary of the still-unsolved murder of Robert Remias. We renew our call for Slovak officials to end speculation that Robert Remias, an ex-policeman, was murdered because he had evidence incriminating the highest levels of the government in the 1995 kidnaping of President Kovac’s son. During the past year, we have repeatedly said that the perpetrators of this crime must be identified, arrested, and brought to justice before an impartial court of law.

“In response, Slovak officials maintained for months after the crime that Remias’ car had ‘spontaneously combusted.’ Then, after the government admitted that explosives had been found in the car, the case was closed for ‘lack of evidence.’ Until this case is reopened and solved, a deep and lasting shadow will be cast over Slovakia’s hopes for a future as a democratic state integrated into the West.

“In the year since Remias’ April 1996 murder, the pattern of suspicious violence in Slovakia has continued. Today, Frantisek Miklosko, Bela Bugar, Frantisek Gaulieder, Miroslav Toman—people from a variety of political parties—are united by two simple facts: they have been the victims of unsolved violent crimes and they oppose your government. Meanwhile, government officials and members of your party have stated the view that their political opponents are staging these violent attacks on themselves.

“As Members of Congress who have been involved with the Helsinki process for a long time, we recognize this coordinated campaign of violence, intimidation, and disinformation. We are surprised that these tactics are still in use seven years after the fall of the Communist regime in Prague and four years after Slovakia established its modern statehood. Reports of these crimes and abuses have dissipated much of the international optimism that greeted the founding of Slovakia in 1993.

“We urge you to act now to restore that optimism and return to the road of democracy and reform. That can only happen when political violence ends and those responsible for these crimes are held accountable for their actions. We have written to the United States Departments of State and Justice and urged that any requests for investigative assistance or support from Slovakia be given favorable consideration, if such requests are determined to be part of a sincere effort to solve these cases.

“We look forward to learning your response to our views and hope that you and your government will make a determined effort to reverse these problems that negatively affect Slovakia’s prospects for a free, prosperous future within the circle of Western democracies.”

Copies of the letter are available from the Commission.